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THE ARGUMENT AGAINST RHETORIC (PROOF SHALL MAKE YOU FREE)

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Abstract:

The rhetoric of logic reveals, we claim, that arguments are about force, ending only when one side submits. Rhetoricians, it is countered, are content to persuade, settling for agreement when truth is wanted—and all is fair in pursuit of consent.

The choice between conceptual rape and seduction is a false choice. It is time to cut against the grain. We are distracted by the rhetoric of logic and gloss the logic of rhetoric. Rhetorical models for pluralistic discourses are vital, but fail as regulative ideals. The ideology of logic's rhetoric is unacceptable, but it is not immutable—so there may be a way out.

I know I am in good company when I admit that I find the arguments between post-Modernists and Realists very confusing. And the more I listen, the more confused I get. Now I am fully willing to accept that most of the responsibility for my own confusion falls on me, but I can't help but think that some of the things that are said on behalf of one side or the other are inherently confusing on their own merits. Still, this could all have been expected since half the disputants embrace the polysemy of interpretation as a discursive *virtue* and so explicitly disavow precision and clarity of expression as ideals, while the other half condemns ambiguity as a cardinal *sin* and so insists on the procrustean bed of bivalence in which the only escape from determinable truth or falsity is utter nonsense. There is, in short, a very great chasm between them and very little genuine engagement across that divide.

As appealing as it would be to enter into the partisan fray—but perhaps more appealing still to sit this one out entirely and declare a pox on both their houses—what I really want to do is satisfy the contradictory desiderata of both camps because there are compelling reasons from both directions. Interpretation is indeed a pluralistic matter, and there are no intellectual activities that are interpretation free; but there are constraints on the interpretations that are open to us in any given area, and sometimes those very real constraints constitute very realist contours. But is it even possible to be a post-Modern Realist, or a pluralistic Foundationalist? Could there be any better sign that something has gone wrong than that we are attracted in apparently opposite directions?

On the analysis that will be proposed here, there are two things at fault: the faulty internal logic of rhetoric and the faulty external rhetoric of logic. What I hope to be able to do is explain how and why these polar opposites attract us, as well as where and when they become too extreme. Afterwards, the recent, but already notorious, article in *Social Text* by the physicist Alan Sokal—and the responses to it—will be used as a test case or vehicle for applying the analysis. (Of course, since I also hope to do all this in the thirty minutes allotted to me, I will have

to over simplify the presentations of realism and post-modernism and gloss over some important caveats. And I'll still have to talk way too fast.)

I. The faulty logic of rhetoric.

What I mean by the "logic of rhetoric" is simply the structures that govern the primarily *interpretive* domains of intellectual activity (roughly, Mill's *moral sciences*, which became Hegel's *Geistes-wissenschaften*). When we come to theorize about a phenomenon—i.e., when we try to make sense of part of the world—we have a wide variety of resources at our disposal: the wisdom of the ages, the testimony of our senses, formal calculi, and, if we're so blessed, divine inspiration or plain common sense. In some contexts, we may be constrained by certain givens—the undeniable empirical data or the text at hand, established legal structures and precedent, the demands of logical consistency, or the dictates of orthodox dogma. In other contexts, limits might be met by the *lack* of any such data, formal criteria, or precedent. The limiting cases, if there are any, would be those in which our theories are *uniquely* determined by those givens. The classical empiricist ideal would have it that pure logic and neutral evidence ought to suffice. They rarely do, of course, which is why classical empiricism is "classical" rather than contemporary. Interpretive contexts are those in which evidence and logic do not suffice. Put positively, those contexts require something more, a creative element. That must be contributed by the critic. This is all best illustrated by reference to criticism and interpretation.

The salient point about the interpretation of a literary text is that even the best of them have to share the field. One answer to the question of what Homer's *Odyssey*, for example, is about, is that it is all about Greek ethnocentrism and cultural imperialism (as when a Cyclopes can be blinded with moral impunity since he's not a fully civilized human being, but a barbarian who gathers rather than raises crops and who even lives with his livestock). That may be a good answer but it does not preclude also interpreting it in other ways, e.g., as the expression of a male mid-life fantasy ("Honest, Honey, I really was trying to get home on time, but it's just that, you know, after the boys and I had this war, some goddess kept me as a sex slave on her island paradise!"). The merit of a literary text is partly measured by the interpretations it supports. The truly great texts speak anew to every generation.

A reader who insists on asking, "But what is *The Odyssey* really about?" has missed this point. Texts are not in themselves uniquely *about* anything. Or, better, they *can be read* as about many different things. This is an important fact about interpretation, but how we should respond to it is a matter for great debate. There are two responses that I find particularly wrongheaded: one by Professor Morris Zapp, the other by Professor Jacques Derrida.

Morris Zapp is fictitious, a character who lives only in the texts of David Lodge's comic novels. (Of course, since "*Il n'y a pas de hors-texte*," it wouldn't be unfair to say that Professor Derrida lives only in texts, too!) In one of the novels, Professor Zapp described himself this way:

"I used to be a Jane Austen man. I think I can say in all modesty that I was *the* Jane Austen man. I wrote five books on Jane Austen, every one of which was trying to establish what her novels meant—and, naturally, to prove that no one had properly understood what they meant before. Then I began a commentary on the works of Jane Austen, the aim of which was to be utterly exhaustive, to examine the novels from every conceivable angle—historical, biographical, rhetorical, mythical, structural, Freudian, Jungian, Marxist, existentialist,

Christian, allegorical, ethical, phenomenological, archetypal, you name it. So that when each commentary was written, there would be *nothing further to say* about the novel in question."¹

What is wrong with this picture? If different perspectives give a different interpretation, why couldn't there be a single multi-perspectival interpretation that is complete, taking all of them into account? We do seem to accept that there is a complete and consistent story to be told about, say, an object like the sun which appears small and yellow from one angle but large and orange from another, stationary within one frame while in motion from another. What is the difference?

Well, consider a different sort of text: the score to a song, say, "My Favourite Things" from the Broadway musical *The Sound of Music* by Rodgers and Hammerstein. It is an innocuous little ditty, mostly heard now only in elevators. And yet, there is a remarkable rendition by the great John Coltrane. What he has done is taken a text—the Richard Rogers score—and given it his own interpretation. Coltrane's version is brilliant, a hard act to follow, but someday, someone will follow it, and maybe even surpass it. The jazz version may have been, at one time, the *latest* word, but it could not possibly be the *last* word.

Zapp is wrong in thinking that there can be a complete story for the same reasons that anyone would be wrong in thinking there could be a definitive performance of a song. Art is not like that. The next generations will have to play it again, for themselves.

It might be objected that I have confused the song itself, as embodied in the score, with its various renditions. That is an important distinction, but the same distinction applies to literary texts. The words on the page, no less than the notes on the sheet, need to be interpreted. Each reading of a text—or performance of a score—produces its own interpretation. The words themselves do not uniquely determine the meaning that a reader will take away from the text, and they are not the only thing that goes into determining that meaning. Indeed, someone can know all the details of *The Odyssey's* text—exactly how many times each letter and word appears, and where—and still be without *any* real understanding of it. The analogy between critical readings and cover performances holds this far, and even a bit further.

Listen again to what Coltrane has done. He has *used* the old text but to his own ends. Isn't that just what literary critics do to written texts? They take an existing text, add their own embellishments, in their own styles, and all to their own ends. In sum, they produce their own new texts that happen to use other texts as the occasions for their production. And, as often happens in the musical context, the new text might, for some purposes, be as good or even better than the original. When that is the case, that new text will occasion yet further texts. Since original texts are themselves ineluctably intertextual, they have essentially the same genesis. The difference has disappeared.

In order to see critical essays this way, as original texts in their own right, the conventional boundary between text and criticism has to be transgressed. This can lead to extremes, however, because there appear to be no theoretical grounds for blurring that boundary that do not at the same time efface *all* boundaries between genres—including the musical distinction between composition and performance and the disciplinary distinction between literature and science.

And that brings us to Professor Derrida, who would balk at the thought that there is a complete story to tell even about something as concrete as the sun. Isn't everything a text, the sun included? Mass and momentum, space and time, and cosmic origins and destiny are the vocabulary of but one solar story. What about its symbolic

significance for religion, its role in biology, and, of course, its place in literature? The sun is at the centre of a lot of stories. Some are *incompatible*—e.g., Kepler's story with its elliptical orbits and Galileo's with its circular ones; others are *commensurable*—e.g., Kepler's heliocentric model and Tycho Brahe's so-called Egyptian system in which the sun orbits the earth, but all other planets orbit the sun; and others still are *incommensurable*—e.g., Kepler's mystical cosmology and the mechanical cosmology that later astronomers wanted Kepler to have had.

There are two facts to keep in mind: First, the fact that multiple interpretations are possible, and that multiple perspectives are even called for, does *not* mean that all interpretations are possible. Although many things go, it does not follow that anything goes. The immediate question, then, is who decides? Is that a descriptive or prescriptive question? What *does* happen, as Kuhn has taught us, is that it is the institutions of the relevant communities—be they literary, scientific, or philosophical—that judge theories acceptable or not.

Second, the fact that anything can be regarded as a text—i.e., something subject to interpretation—does not mean that everything *is* a text. The reasoning looks patent, even syllogistic:

A text is whatever is subject to interpretation;
Everything can be subjected to interpretation;
Therefore, everything is a text.

Yes, everything can be *textualized*, put into *context*, but that just means that everything is "textable" not that everything is already "textual." Recall what Wittgenstein pointed out in the *Tractatus*: every picture can be regraded as a fact in its own right, but that does not mean every fact is a picture nor that every picture is true. Any configuration of parts counts as a fact—including those complex configurations of written words, spoken words, and painted colours that we use to represent other configurations. All of these *can* serve as pictures, or, in Derrida's terms, as "texts," but not all of them *do* serve that way. That involves us. And not all of them are true: that involves the world. The syllogism fails because of the ambiguous major.

The relevant parts of the logic of criticism can be summarized as follows (I hope these are all boring and non-controversial):

The Logic of Criticism

LC1. The existence of a satisfactory, insightful, or compelling interpretation does not preclude the possibility of other satisfactory, insightful, or compelling interpretations.

LC2. Satisfactory, insightful, or compelling interpretations may be incompatible, inconsistent, and even incommensurable with one another.

LC3. Some interpretations may be better than others. Not all interpretations are equally satisfactory, insightful, or compelling.

LC4. There *can* be unacceptable interpretations.

LC5. Asking what a text is "really about" is itself an interpretive question, and may not have a single answer.

LC6. There can be no last word, no definitive or final interpretation; *the critical enterprise is a permanent part*

of the human condition.

Zapp was wrong in thinking that there could be a final story about a story. That some interpretations are better than others does not mean that there has to be a best of all possible interpretations. *The existence of critical standards entails neither a single 'true' interpretation nor a single all-encompassing truth of the matter.* Realism does not follow. On the other hand, Derrida is equally wrong in thinking that there are only stories. Yes, there will always be another story to tell about a good story, just as there will always be space for new versions of an old song, but that does not mean that there never really was a single score for that song. *Critical pluralism does not entail anti-realism.*

What is more important for present purposes is the logic of *rhetoric* which is implicit in the logic of criticism and revealed in critical practice. Since the evidence provided by texts is never univocal, and the task of constructing an interpretation is a creative one for which there can be no algorithmic—or "logical"—procedure, then comparative evaluations of interpretations is also an extra-logical matter: a matter to be decided by whichever rhetorical strategies are most effective within the relevant discourse circles. The following principles—now controversial but no longer boring—can be extracted:

The Implicit Logic of Rhetoric

LR1. The *only* grounds for preferring one interpretation to another are rhetorical.

LR2. Rhetorical grounds are *always* defeasible.

LR3. Thus, there can be no *absolutely* unacceptable interpretations, only rhetorically defeated interpretations—and that status is mutable.

Note what has happened: the critical principle of interpretive pluralism has been elevated from a methodological imperative about rhetoric to the metaphysical thesis of anti-Realism. The result is the rejection of LC4 in favour of the implausible LR3. The logic of rhetoric carried to this extreme cannot accommodate substantial or dogmatic metaphysical theses of any stripe. As interpretations of the world, they are unacceptable: the insights that made them seem compelling have, in the end, produced an unsatisfactory result.

II. The faulty rhetoric of logic.

The Realist counterarguments to the post-Modern embrace of rhetoric are characterized by an extreme ideology of its own, one that rejects rhetoric entirely. Indeed, the ideology is implicated in the very concept of a *counterargument*. Arguments are conceived in two different ways. The "official" line is that arguments are sustained chains of inferences connected by objective, impersonal, and dispassionate logic. They are, in short, constructions of Pure Rationality. (Yeah, right!) The *de facto* conception of argument implicit in this, however, is something else. Arguments are verbal wars. They are adversarial moments in discourse with winners and losers. Good arguments are *powerful, on target, with lots of punch*, and maybe even *knockouts or killers* unless *unbreachable* defenses can withstand the *assaults* or the *counterattacks* are even *stronger*. All is fair in love and argument.

As much as the rhetoric of logic implicates the argument-as-war paradigm,² that paradigm implicates a realist

metaphysics. The bivalence of winners and losers becomes a bivalence of truth and falsity, as well as an excluded middle. The middle ground of compromise is discouraged as a no man's land of neither true nor false—or worse, in the patriarchal mode, a *woman's* land of subjectivity, emotion, or other forms of non-cognitive nonsense:

The Rhetoric of Logic

RL1. Arguments are essentially adversarial discourse events, with winners and losers.

RL2. There are objective criteria for deciding the outcome. (That is, winners are Winners.)

RL3. Thus, the bivalence of winners and losers is tantamount to, or evidence of, a bivalence of True and False.

RL4. Refutation is objective. Refuted theories are objectively False.

RL5. There is no middle. Whatever is not victorious or defeated—or at least a contestant, and thus possibly victorious or defeated (read: *verifiable* or *falsifiable*)—is nonsense.

The rhetoric is objectionable on various grounds—e.g., social, ethical, politico-pragmatic, and (I think *especially*) pedagogical ones³—but there is an easy way out, a way to weather those objections: it is, after all, *just* the rhetoric of logic that is problematic, the window dressing, and not the real thing itself. *The rhetoric of logic is mutable*. The adversarial nature of arguments may be a feature of the primary metaphors we use to conceptualize argumentation, but it is not essential. The metaphor is so entrenched, however, that it is hard to see our way around it, and hard to see that there is this way out. Arguments need to be conceptualized in other ways. We need new metaphors.

Despite all this, it is important not to lose sight of the fact that meta-physical realism by itself has no great epistemological consequences. In particular, it does not entail that there is a theory-neutral observational vocabulary. All that scientific realism really requires is that there *is* a world for which there *could* be a theory-neutral description. But the sense of "could" here leaves itself open to all manner of interpretation. The possibility need not even be accessible to humans, being instead something we can aim for but never reach, or approach but never attain. That is, like *belles lettres* critical readings and musical cover performances, there might not be any *last word* in science.

There needs to be a *caveat* added to this. If there can be no last word in science, it would be for very different reasons than in the critical and musical cases, because the phenomena itself are very different. In the interpretive cases, the open-endedness arises from the inexhaustible possibility for new genres, new vocabularies, and new perspectives. *Perhaps* those same considerations apply to the case of scientific theories—certainly some have argued for that—but the open-endedness implicated by the rhetoric of logic arises from the inexhaustibility of any *single* vocabulary. Further refinement, greater exactitude, and more precise articulation is always possible. The scientific story is *generically* a story of *progress*. Of course, it is "progress" in a curious and problematic sense of the word—"curious" because it is hard to make sense of the claim that we are getting closer to an infinitely distant target; and "problematic" because if hard bivalence is taken seriously, then scientific stories *in progress* could never really be literally true. They would have to be false, or worse.

To make this explicit:

The Ideology of Scientific Realism

SR1. There is a complete, definite truth of the matter, a "God's eye story," to be told about the world.

SR2. Ultimately, this Truth may be inaccessible, but it can at least be approached indefinitely, asymptotically. Success may be impossible, but progress is always possible.

SR3. Thus, no last word can be expected; *the scientific enterprise is a permanent feature of the human condition*.

Do not confuse LC6 and SR3! One is about the permanent possibility of new vocabularies; the other is about the permanent possibility of new or better uses for the given vocabulary. Their superficial similarity invites seeing them as part of the same philosophical parcel, but they have to be paid for separately.

III. A case study:

Last summer, an article appeared by the physicist Alan Sokal entitled "Transgressing the Boundaries: Toward a Transformative Hermeneutics of Quantum Gravity." He wrote it as a hoax, a parody of post-Modernism, complete with all the right jargon, all the requisite inter-textuality—a ten page bibliography doing fair justice to the field, and ten more pages of dense footnotes—and especially all the academically correct political conclusions. What it did not have, according to Sokal, was anything like reasoned arguments or a trace of evidence for any of its assertions. It had only deftly deployed jargon and apt allusions.

The ensuing brouhaha was a classic academic cacophony. Sokal either exposed the vacuity of Science Studies in particular and the Humanities and Social Sciences in general or else he didn't, producing a straw man of the worst sort. He produced a brilliant piece of biting satire, a time-honored prerogative of the essayist unless it was an incoherent and shoddy failure of an attempt published only out of a sort of affirmative action for scientists in a venue in which they are not often heard. He challenged the political left, in order to provoke an intellectual house cleaning or he provided more ammunition for right-wing anti-humanism. It was an indefensible, if not altogether unethical, violation of academic protocol or just possibly an inadvertent but partly successful contribution to the discussion of science's location in the larger culture!

What was it really all about—science studies, the social production of knowledge, science and anti-science, the privileged position of the natural sciences in our universities, the lack of intellectual rigor in the humanities, the politics of post-Modernism, or what? As we know, but too often forget, asking what a text is "really about" is generally pointless. Publishing this article caused a lot of other things to happen, including the appearance in print, across the airwaves, and on the internet of a whole slew of interpretations and responses, a process that is by no means over. Sokal claims that the point was primarily political—that as a member of the Old Left, he was chagrined by the anti-scientific attitudes and accompanying intellectual sloppiness prevalent in the post-Modernist-dominated New Left. Noble as that may be, it is neither here nor there for present purposes. My concern is really with the *reactions* to his article: the cries of "Foul!" and hoots of disapproval from some quarters, and the squeals of delight and rounds of cheers from others. To oversimplify matters: rhetoricians have seen it as malicious, logicians as *de-licious*. What I would like to suggest is that *the logic of rhetoric can't really justify this condemnation* of Sokal's article, but *neither can the rhetoric of logic really justify the praise* of him. There is indeed room for a new rhetoric for logic.

(i) Let me address the first part of my claim, that the *logic of rhetoric can't really justify that condemnation*. The first point is that he *did* indeed master the game. His article was a very successful move in the "play" of this language game—and isn't that all there is to it? Rhetoricians have almost unanimously condemned the piece, but the piece really is a rhetorical *tour de force*, an impressive display of erudition, scholarship, and mastery of the conceptual vocabulary of postmodernism. And that is quite an accomplishment! For example, the rhetorical strategies he employs to lull the reader into accepting some of his more outrageous claims are all time-honoured for their effectiveness (and time and again dismissed by Logicians!): copious citations of prominent or respected figures in the field (i.e., Appeals to Authority, Bandwagon), anecdotal evidence (Hasty Generalizations), overstating the opposition and understating nuanced alternatives (Straw Man, False Dichotomies), and, perhaps above all, the misuse and abuse of scientific metaphors, including all the usual suspects: the Principle of Indeterminacy, the Uncertainty Principle, the Theory of Relativity, and the more recently vogue Chaos Theory (Equivocations, Weak Analogies).

Is it relevant that he was doing all these consciously? It would seem as though authorial intent cannot legitimately enter into a post-Modernist assessment of Sokal's piece. The texts of his confession in *Lingua Franca* and his *Afterword*⁴ are fair game, but only as distinct and autonomous texts. The original article by itself is already a rare opportunity, an open invitation for deconstructionist potshots—but that, I think, would serve only to further undermine those very critiques by emphasizing how successful the article really was! As a text that can be richly mined, it is a Critical Theorist's motherlode. As a move in the Critical game, it was a smash, so shouldn't it be *praised not condemned*?

(ii) The analysis just presented misses an important point: Sokal wasn't playing the rhetoricians' game. He was playing a different game, so how well he did at *their* game is irrelevant. Succeeding in the rhetorical game isn't something that logico-realists can call delicious. He is supposed to have exposed one game, which is to play a different game. But according to that second game, everything in the first game is all nonsense, and not, therefore, something that could really be done *well*. The situation is the reverse from what was described above: realist-logicians have praised him, but the *rhetoric of logic can't really justify that praise*!

What is it that Sokal can be taken as having proved? Well, if it is all *nonsense*, then it is not an *argument* of any sort, and so cannot have *proved* anything. But didn't he "demonstrate" or somehow "show" the lack of any rigor or standards in post-Modernism, the pretentiousness and wrongheadedness of those who engage in science studies while being incompetent and ignorant about science itself, and, finally, the vacuity of postmodernism as a tool for the political left? There are three very different claims here. There is some merit to each of them—but some important qualifying disclaimers for each one, too.

(a) The question of the lack of standards: Sokal's achievement cannot be denied. Writing a passably coherent post-Modern essay is no mean feat. The fact that he did it well means that there are indeed standards, and he did in fact approach them. More to the point, some of the things he wrote aren't all that bad. Attention has focused on the "howlers" in the article—the grossly egregious errors and the patently ludicrous claims. But part of what made the article successful—i.e., able to get past the desk of Andrew Ross, that issue's editor—was that Sokal didn't put the howlers up front. For good stylistic and polemical reasons, they were presented at the end of discussions that led to them. Now, granted, anyone with even a *minimum* of sophistication in mathematics and physics who was still paying attention six pages into the article would recognize the vacuity of the claim that, "the π of Euclid and the G of Newton are now perceived in their ineluctable historicity." I agree with Sokal: if you can't recognize that as hokum, you really have no business expecting anyone else to bother listening to whatever you have to say about mathematics or science. The trick to being able to write something like that and get away

with it is to bury it at the end of a series of claims that, initially, are arguably plausible and technically innocuous, but which get progressively more theoretical as they get more absurd so that the readers are *not* paying attention to the technical side at all, and hearing only what they want to hear:

In this way, the infinite-dimensional invariance group erodes the distinction between observer and observed; the π of Euclid and the G of Newton, formerly thought to be constant and universal, are now perceived in their ineluctable historicity; and the putative observer becomes fatally decentred, disconnected from any epistemic link to a space-time point that can no longer be defined by geometry alone.⁵

"Wait a second" did he just say that π was a variable? Whatever, but there was something there that sounded important about space-time and relativity, and that the centre cannot hold. The point is that there really *are* 'lines' of reasoning here. They are not arguments in the official sense—chains of Pure Reason—but neither are they Pure Nonsense. In fact, what they are closest to is the unofficial but *de facto* concept of arguments enshrined in the rhetoric of logic!

(b) The pretentiousness of science studies: As a philosopher whose own field has an embarrassing history of dilettantism, I am acutely sensitive to the charge. But I am also willing to face up to it when it can be pressed. And the shoe certainly does fit many. *But not all*, of course. There is a parallel here to the history of Positivism and its anti-metaphysicalism. First, just as the Logical Positivists over-stated the case in tarring all speculative philosophers with a brush that some, perhaps even many, thoroughly deserved, so too, the conclusion that science studies is all hokum is equally unwarranted. Second, as unlamented as the death of Positivism may be, it must be admitted that the Positivist critique of metaphysics has had a good, healthy effect in the long run. We have not abandoned metaphysics, but perhaps we are a bit more careful now, keeping a tighter rein on our speculations. I suspect, and hope, that Sokal's hoax might have a similarly healthy effect.

(c) The vacuity of post-Modernism as a tool for the political left: Here's the kicker. By the lights of Scientific Realism, Sokal *couldn't possibly* have shown the vacuity of post-Modernism. By the realist criteria of Logic and evidence, his article is an abject failure—a menagerie, as noted, of Straw Men, Weak Analogies, Slippery Slopes, etc. So he can only claim to have succeeded, by some other criteria. But that requires recognizing that there *are* relevant criteria, in which case it's not really vacuous after all. There is no recognizable distinction between good nonsense and bad nonsense for the ideology of scientific realism. It can't be well done; it can only be half-baked—but Sokal's article *was* well done. The discussions that lead to his blatantly ridiculous assertions do indeed, in some sense, "lead" to them. His article does show some things, but manages to do so only because of the efficacy of the very same rhetorical strategies he is supposedly exposing. Sarcasm and ridicule are indeed effective—but, like hyperbole, metaphor, and other tropes, they are only Rhetorically effective. There is nothing "Logical" about them!






IV. *Conclusions.*

There is a fly in the ointment. What if, regardless of how far in his cheek Sokal's tongue may have been, some of the fanciful connections he made, or the overstated assertions he pretended to have inferred, or his avowedly ersatz arguments, contain, or even just point to, "satisfactory, insightful, or compelling interpretations" of the phenomena? Some have indeed argued as much. Would it matter whether he repudiated them? Are the profound arguments against theism that Tolstoy put in Ivan Karamazov's mouth any less profound simply because their

author preferred Alyosha Karamazov's naive pietism? How can we take *anything* from the article when neither the rhetoric of logic nor the logic of rhetoric will allow it?

Perhaps the fly is only caught in a fly-bottle rather than stuck in an ointment. The way out is to recognize that on the one hand the adversarial and bivalent rhetoric of logic is an illusion and on the other the logic of rhetoric is an unwarranted extrapolation of the logic of interpretation. Stories are told in many ways and need to be interpreted in many ways. Looking for logical coherence is one of those ways, but so is looking for the inspiration that will lead to insight. (Isn't this something the rhetoricians should have been saying?) That still leaves us with the hard work of devising the new rhetoric for logic and revising the logic of rhetoric but, fortunately for me, that would take us beyond the time allowed for this paper.

Notes

1. Lodge 1985, pp. 28-29. 
2. The *locus classicus* for the argument-as-war paradigm is Lakoff and Johnson 1980. 
3. This is discussed at length in Cohen 1995. 
4. Sokal 1996b and 1996c. 
5. Sokal 1996a, p. 222. 

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